



**2+4 in 2004**

**... and 2005 and 2006**

# A message from the Superintendent of Public Instruction

A diploma from a Virginia high school says a lot about the graduate whose name it bears.

It tells potential employers that the graduate possesses the reading, writing, and mathematics skills required for success in the workplace. It tells admissions officers at colleges, universities, and career and technical schools that the bearer is ready for the rigors of post-secondary education.

The Virginia Department of Education has prepared this brochure so you will understand the commonwealth's new graduation requirements and the many options available to you for earning a high school diploma.

On the back of this brochure you will find a chart that will help you track your progress toward earning your high school diploma. You also will find answers to questions frequently asked about Virginia's new graduation requirements.

I encourage you to read this brochure carefully and discuss any questions you might have with your parents and your guidance counselor.

Sincerely,



Jo Lynne DeMary  
Superintendent of Public Instruction



# YOUR

## High School Diploma

Most Virginia students earn either a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma. Beginning with the graduating class of 2004\*, students must earn a combination of standard and verified units of credit to receive either diploma. Students earn a **standard unit of credit** for a course by successfully completing 140 clock hours of instruction and meeting the objectives of the course. A **verified unit of credit** is awarded for a course in which a student earns a standard unit of credit and achieves a passing score on a corresponding Standards of Learning (SOL) test or other test approved by the Board of Education. Six verified credits are required for a Standard Diploma. Nine verified credits are required for an Advanced Studies Diploma.

**2 + 4 =**

**Standard Diploma**



“2 + 4” is an easy way for students in the graduating classes of 2004, 2005, and 2006 to remember the combination of verified credits required to earn a Standard Diploma. You are included in a transition period\*\* established by the Board of Education for the gradual phase-in of Virginia’s new graduation requirements.

The “2” in the equation represents the two verified credits in English you must earn to graduate with a Standard Diploma. Most students will earn these credits by passing these two end-of-course SOL tests, which typically are taken during the junior year:

- English: Reading, Literature, and Research
- English: Writing

You also may earn the two required verified credits in English by passing substitute tests approved by the Board of Education. Your guidance counselor can give you more information about these substitute tests.

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\* Students who entered the ninth grade for the first time during 2000-01.

\*\* Includes all students who entered the ninth grade for the first time during 2000-01, 2001-02, and 2002-03.

The “4” in 2 + 4 represents the other four verified credits students must earn for a Standard Diploma. Students in the classes of 2004, 2005, and 2006 may earn these 4 verified credits by passing any four SOL tests or substitute tests approved by the board.

2 + 4 means students included in the transition period may lean on their strongest subjects as they earn the six verified credits required for a Standard Diploma.

For example, a student may earn a Standard Diploma by passing the required number of courses, passing the two end-of-course English SOL tests, passing the Algebra I test, passing the World History I test, and passing two career and technical examinations on the Board of Education’s list of approved substitute tests (see “Frequently Asked Questions” for more information on substitute tests).

Transition students who, after remediation, fail a retake of a history/social science or science test, but achieve a score of 375 or better, may be awarded a verified credit by their local school board, following a review of their class work and/or a demonstration of their mastery of the content of the course. Because these are locally awarded verified credits, requirements may vary from school division to school division. Ask your guidance counselor for more information about locally awarded verified credits.

### **Credits required for a Standard Diploma for the classes of 2004, 2005, and 2006**

<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Standard Units of Credit</b>	<b>Verified Units of Credit</b>
<b>English</b>	4	2
<b>Mathematics</b>	3	
<b>Science</b>	3	
<b>History and Social Science</b>	3	
<b>Health and Physical Education</b>	2	
<b>Fine or Practical Arts</b>	1	
<b>Electives</b>	6	
<b>Student-Selected Tests</b>		4
<b>Total</b>	22	6

# Earning a Standard Diploma After 2006

Beginning with the graduating class of 2007\*, students will earn a Standard Diploma by passing the required courses and passing two end-of-course English tests, one test each in mathematics, history/social science, and science, and one test of their own choosing.

\* Students who entered the ninth grade for the first time in 2003-04.

## 2 + More = Advanced Studies Diploma

The new testing requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma also became effective with the class of 2004. Students earn an Advanced Studies Diploma by passing the required courses and passing the two end-of-course English tests, two tests each in mathematics, history/social science, and science, and one test of their own choosing, for a total of nine verified credits.

### Credits required for an Advanced Studies Diploma for students who entered the ninth grade in 2000-01 (class of 2004 and beyond)

Subject Area	Standard Units of Credit	Verified Units of Credit
English	4	2
Mathematics	4	2
Science	4	2
History and Social Science	4	2
Foreign Language	3	
Health and Physical Education	2	
Fine or Practical Arts	1	
Electives	2	
Student-Selected Tests		1
Total	24	9

*The Virginia Department of Education does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, disabilities, or national origin in employment or in its educational programs and activities.*

# Frequently Asked Questions

## *Are students who fail high school end-of-course tests permitted to retake the tests?*

Students may retake high school end-of-course tests as often as a school division's testing schedule will permit. Students who score within 25 points of passing or have extenuating circumstances may be eligible to retake a test before the next scheduled administration.

## *What happens if a student passes a course but fails the corresponding end-of-course test?*

As mentioned above, students may retake tests needed to earn verified units of credit for graduation. Students who score between 375-399 on a test are eligible for an expedited retake, which means the student would be able to retake the test before the next scheduled test administration.

Transition students (students who entered the ninth grade for the first time during 2000-01, 2001-02, and 2002-03) who after remediation fail a retake of a history/social science or science test, but achieve a score of 375 or better, may be awarded a verified credit by their local school board, following a review of their class work and/or demonstration of their mastery of the content of the course. Verified credits awarded in this manner are awarded at the discretion of local school boards and apply only toward a Standard Diploma. Ask your guidance counselor for more information about locally awarded verified credits.

## *May tests of equal or greater rigor be substituted for SOL tests for the awarding of verified credits?*

Yes. The Board of Education has approved a number of tests that students may take to earn verified credits toward graduation.

The board also has approved a list of career and technical examinations for licensure or certification that may be substituted for SOL tests to earn student-selected verified units of credit. Tests for licensure or certification that require the demonstration of knowledge and skills beyond what is associated with a single course may result in the awarding of two units of verified credit. Your guidance counselor and career and technical education teacher can tell you more about these examinations.

A list of substitute tests and examinations approved for the awarding of student-selected verified units of credit is available on the Virginia Department of Education Web site at the address on the opposite page.

## *How many verified credits do students who transfer into Virginia high schools from other states or private schools need to earn a Standard Diploma?*

Transfer students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the tenth grade during or before the 2003-04 school year must earn one verified credit in English and three verified credits in subjects of their own choosing to receive a Standard Diploma.

Transfer students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time at the beginning of the eleventh grade during or before the 2004-05 school year must earn one verified credit in English and three verified credits in subjects of their own choosing to receive a Standard Diploma.

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the tenth grade during or after 2004-05 must earn a minimum of four verified units of credit, including one each in English, mathematics, history/social science, and science to receive a Standard Diploma. Students entering at the beginning of the eleventh grade during or after 2005-06 also must earn a minimum of four verified units of credit, including one each in English, mathematics, history/social science, and science to receive a Standard Diploma.

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade must earn a minimum of two verified credits, including one in English and one in a subject of their own choosing to receive a Standard Diploma.

### ***How many verified credits do students who transfer into Virginia high schools from other states or private schools need to earn an Advanced Studies Diploma?***

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the tenth grade or at the beginning of the eleventh grade must earn a minimum of six verified credits, including two in English, one each in mathematics, history/social science, and science, and one in a subject of their own choosing to receive an Advanced Studies Diploma.

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade must earn a minimum of four verified units of credit, including one in English and three in subjects of their own choosing to receive an Advanced Studies Diploma.

### ***What about students who transfer to a Virginia public high school during their senior year?***

Students transferring after 20 instructional hours per course of their senior or twelfth-grade year shall be given every opportunity to earn a Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma. If it is not possible for the student to meet the requirements for a Virginia Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma, arrangements should be made for the student's previous school to award the diploma. If these arrangements cannot be made, a waiver of the verified unit of credit requirements may be available to the student. Your guidance counselor can tell you more about how to request a waiver.

More information on Virginia's graduation requirements is available on the  
Virginia Department of Education Web site at  
***[www.pen.k12.va.us/2plus4in2004](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/2plus4in2004)***



# What's **YOUR** Score?



Subject Area	Standard Units of Credit	Verified Units of Credit
English		
Mathematics		
Science		
History and Social Science		
Foreign Language		
Health and Physical Education		
Fine or Practical Arts		
Electives		
Student-Selected Tests		
Total		

**YOUR high school diploma is  
YOUR TICKET  
to the rest of your life!**